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La Perdición

Virgil Suárez

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La Perdición

by Virgil Suárez

What my father spoke of some men who lost
their way, either through booze, women, cock-
fights—or all. Men who held a rooster in their

arms and whispered secrets into their ears, sun's
radiance sparkling off the bird's plumage. Talons
with *espuelas magicas*, magic spurs bound in leather

straps to the bird's legs. Men of sweaty faces,
shadowy eyes, tattoos of women on their arms.
Yes, men who'd lost their way in the world.

Los perdidos para siempre. Those lost forever.
In their country, in the fields, dangerous men.
Men of power, muscles bulging under cotton

shirts. Men with rolls of money rubber-banded
together in their pockets. Men with hidden, sharp
knives, ready in one minnow-swift motion.

to cut you, tear out your tongue, leave a gash
in your side. Those men, those men of memory.
Luminous ghosts now, walking in and out

of my life. Like my father, a ghost himself, who
sits here next to me, holds me in his arms, whispers
fighting words into my burning, hollowed ears.

